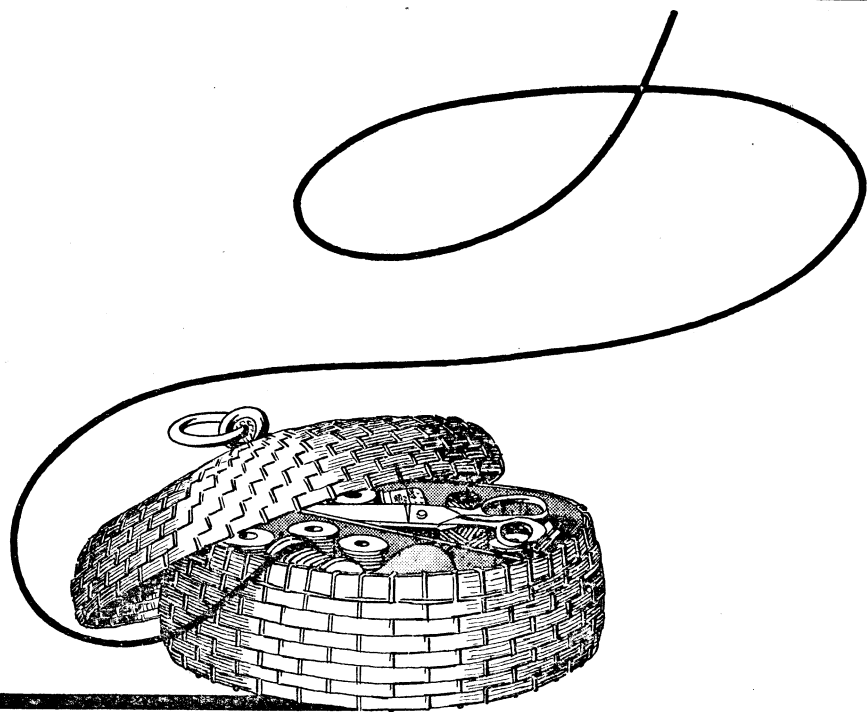


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ABC's of **MENDING**



FARMERS' BULLETIN No. 1925
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

ABC's of MENDING

by

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A TINY HOLE can make a garment practically useless. A well-done mend can make it "like new" again. Such is the magic of the art of mending . . . an art any homemaker can master easily.

Besides being a part of wardrobe first aid, mending comes under the head of patriotic duty these days. It's part of wartime good citizenship to take care of the things we have . . . to waste nothing. With labor and looms turning out more goods for military use, production of civilian clothing has been curtailed. Some types of clothing now in your wardrobe cannot be replaced for the duration.

Plan Your Mending

Check all ready-mades before they are worn. It is easier to "prevent" by strengthening weak spots with a stitch or two than to "cure" with many more stitches later on.

Look over clothing regularly with an eye to needed mending. If you catch breaks before they grow, you'll cut down a lot on mending time.

Take a stitch in time. Once you've found a place that needs mending, mend it before the garment is worn again.

Modern Mending Basket.

Whenever you do your mending, you'll find a mending basket a big help. This may be a basket . . . box . . . bag . . . large drawer . . . any place where you can keep mending supplies together. With materials all collected, it is easy to pick up bits of mending in your spare time . . . not have the chore of hunting for your equipment each time.

Keep in the mending basket different sizes of fine needles . . . different sizes and colors of thread . . . darning cotton . . . scraps of patching material for everyday clothes . . . buttons . . . bits of net . . . tape . . . snaps . . . hooks and eyes . . . a stocking darning if you use one . . . perhaps little patches you press on to mend some materials . . . and any other mending helps you use often.

Check Ready-Mades to Save Mending

Check your ready-made clothing before it goes into permanent service to see if there are places that need strengthening. A few well-placed stitches can save you much patching and darning later on . . . help you get the best possible service from these clothes.

Seams. Uneven stitching makes weak seams. It may be necessary to re-stitch some seams. A narrow seam allowance may not hold material that frays. If the material frays, but not badly, simple overcasting of the raw seam edges will make a seam secure. If the material frays quite readily, it's better to run a row of machine stitching near the cut edges—then overcast the edges.

Armhole seams rip or pull if the stitching is loose or the seam allowance small. A good way to make sure they hold is to stitch them twice . . . placing one row of stitching one-fourth inch inside the other. If the material frays or pulls readily, also overcast the cut edges.

Hems. As a rule, hems are sewed loosely in ready-mades. Rehem with secure stitches and strong thread.

Plackets. Plackets often need to be strengthened because there is considerable strain at the ends. Put in extra stitches at the end of the placket, or sew tape stays across the ends on the underside.

Pocket corners. Strengthen pockets at the corners to keep them from tearing. For high waist pockets, barred stitching usually is enough. Dress and apron pockets must be more sturdy. Lay a piece of tape on the underside in line with the pocket top. Stitch it in with the corners.

Stretchy edges. Necklines, collars, plackets, and pockets not cut on the straight of the goods sometimes stretch, then tear. Stay these places by sewing tape on the underside of the outer edges. Or rip open the facing, sew tape next to the edge, and restitch facing.

Fastenings. Rework raveled buttonholes with a buttonhole or blanket stitch. If the buttonhole is completely raveled, machine-stitch close to the cut edge of the hole. Then work the buttonhole by hand . . . with a buttonhole or a blanket stitch.

Resew loose buttons with strong thread that matches the garment. Leave a shank of thread so the buttonhole can slip under the button without straining the cloth.

Resew hanging snaps or hooks and eyes neatly and securely. Use strong but not heavy thread that matches.

Dangling threads. Fasten off threads everywhere that stitching ends. Pull these threads to the inside of the garment and tie securely. Or run them through a needle and fasten with a few stitches . . . or pull inside a hem or fold.

Patching and Darning Pointers

Suit Mend to Break

Here are points to think about when you are deciding which darn or patch you want to use on a particular place to be mended.

★**Shape** of the place to be mended. A bad snag naturally calls for a different type of mend than a slanting cut or a straight tear.

★**Material**. Does it have a nap or is it smooth? Is it light or heavy in weight? Is it washable or must it be dry-cleaned? Does it fray?

★**Size** of the hole. Some mends are more successfully done on a small scale . . . others on large.

★**Where** is the hole? Is it in a spot that will be strained constantly when you wear the garment? Or is it in an out-of-the-way place? This makes a difference in how sturdy the mend must be.

Patches

Cut the patch on the straight of the goods. Sew it on so the crosswise and lengthwise yarns in the patch will match crosswise and lengthwise yarns in the material.

If the material has a design, match each detail perfectly. That helps hide the mend.

If the garment is old and faded, try to get a matching patch from a hem or some spot where you can spare old material.

Always shrink new material before using it to patch a wash garment . . . or it may shrink and pucker when the garment is laundered.

Darns

Plain darns are suitable for mending small holes . . . snags . . . worn places.

Except for very small holes and worn spots, darns are seldom used on any material except wool or heavy fabrics that have somewhat the same texture as wool.

Use thread that blends with the material. Pull yarns from a scrap of the same cloth if you have saved any. Or ravel them from straight-cut seams where they may be spared. Use lengthwise yarns for darning lengthwise . . . crosswise yarns for crosswise darning. If you are raveling yarns from the garment, you may be able to get crosswise yarns from the inside of the hem . . . lengthwise yarns from the seam allowances in the skirt and waist.

If you can't get self yarn, use dull matching sewing thread that blends with the fabric. Remember that thread usually works up lighter than it appears on the spool, so it is better to buy slightly darker thread.

Study the weave of the fabric. Repeat it as closely as you can. Work under a strong light.

Use a fine needle and short thread. Long thread pulled back and forth across a tear or hole tends to pull and stretch a darn out of shape.

Work for flatness. If the yarns are pulled up tight, the finished darn puckers and looks drawn. Too loose stitching, on the other hand, will make the darn look "puffy."

Draw the mending yarn through the yarns in the cloth itself when you can. Take tiny stitches and be especially careful not to pull them too taut when you make a turn. Run the stitches unevenly into the cloth around the edge of the darn . . . so you won't be able to see a definite line where the darn starts.

Pull ends of darning yarns to the inside of the garment and cut them off . . . but not too closely. Be sure that all raw edges of the hole or tear are on the underside of the darn.

Usually it's better to darn on the right side of the material, because you can see how well you are blending the darn into the fabric.

Press the finished darn. Steam-press on the wrong side. Brush darns on wool to lift the nap.

A general mending guide that may help you select the best type of mend for the commonest types of holes begins below. But remember, there are no hard-and-fast mending rules. Work out mends of your own, keeping in mind that the main idea is simply to reproduce the original as nearly as possible.

Straight Tears

When a fabric tears, it always breaks straight on the crosswise or lengthwise yarns. The simplest tear is the straight tear in one direction.

Washable Clothing . . . Clothing That Frays in Dry Cleaning

Clothes that must go through many tubbings need sturdy mends—so do those that fray easily even though they are dry-cleaned. Three most suitable patches for this type of clothing are the *hemmed patch*, *machine-stitched patch*, and *pressed-on* or *thermoplastic patch*.

The hemmed patch is a sturdy mend done by hand. To make it, first cut the smallest possible square or rectangle that will remove the snag, hole, or tear. Cut along crosswise and lengthwise yarns. Then clip this hole diagonally at each corner—about one-fourth of an inch. Turn under about the distance of a yarn or two beyond the edge of these clips. Crease sharply or press but be careful not to stretch the edges.

Cut the patch about 1 inch larger all around than the hole after you have matched the pattern carefully from the right side. Baste the patch in . . . then hem it on the right side with very fine stitches. Let these stitches catch in the very edge of the crease . . . stitch a little closer around the corners. Turn the garment wrong side out. Turn the patch piece under about one-fourth of an inch. Snip off the corners to avoid thick lumps. Baste and hem with stitches so tiny they will not be noticeable on the right side. This patch is good for housedresses, play and work clothes . . . anything that goes regularly into the tub.

For silks and rayons that are dry-cleaned, hem the patch only on the right side of material. Merely tack patch with loose stitches to the garment on the wrong side so it will not fold or wad when pressed.

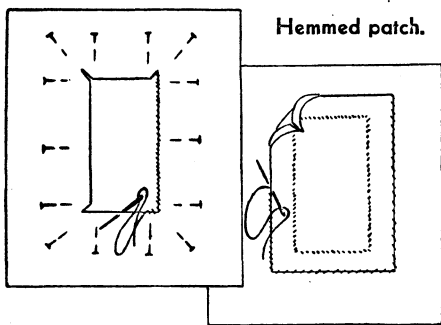
The machine-stitched patch is sturdier and is quicker to make, but on some materials is more noticeable. This patch is best suited to garments such as men's overalls, work shirts, and children's play clothes, where appearance is not all-important. It can be made on any sturdy wash material.

First, cut the torn spot to make a circular hole. Lay a matched piece of fabric under the hole. Baste it in place. Then on the right side, stitch by machine back and forth over the cut edge until it is firm and secure—with no rough edges. Trim away any extra material on the underside so the patch will not be bulky.

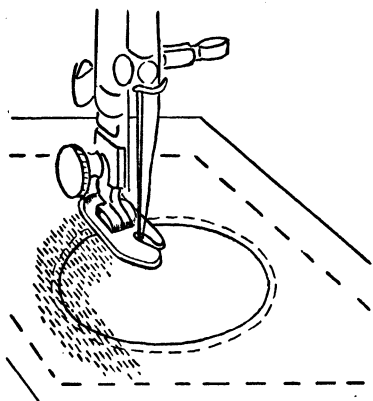
Patches to press on may be bought at many notion counters. They are made of various types of materials, treated on one side so that they may be pressed on to the right side of the material. They are best suited to men's shirts, women's uniforms, and cotton underwear. If you cut out your own patches from treated material, make corners rounded rather than sharp. They stick better and more smoothly.

Dry-Cleanable Silks and Rayons

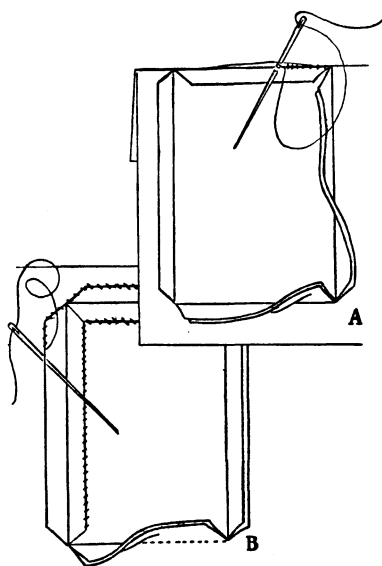
An inset patch is the best mend for most dry-cleanable silks and rayons. Trim the damaged place with the grain of the goods so that it forms a square or rectangle. Clip the corners . . . turn the edges under evenly and exactly with the grain of the goods all around. Press, do not crease with your fingernail, because that stretches soft materials. If the fabric is printed, shift the patch piece around under the hole until you find the exact spot that matches. Pin it there.



Hemmed patch.



Machine-stitched patch.



Inset patch.

There are two ways to finish the patch. First one is to check the exact size patch that fits the hole. Then turn under and trim off the extra material, leaving only a small seam allowance. The amount you leave depends on the material—more seam allowance is necessary for materials that fray readily. Check again to make sure the patch fits the hole exactly. From the wrong side, overhand the patch into the hole with tiny stitches caught through the two folded edges. When the patch is done, press it flat, and press seams open. Overcast raw edges on the inside of the patch to keep them from fraying in cleaning.

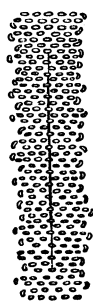
Second way to finish the inset patch after matching the patch to the hole is as follows: Use a long hemming stitch and contrasting thread to baste the patch in place to the garment. Take these stitches on the very edge of the fold. This is done from the right side. Now turn the garment inside out. On the line of basting stitches, seam the patch in by machine. Be very careful, for if the patch does not fit perfectly it will pucker or look drawn.

Wool

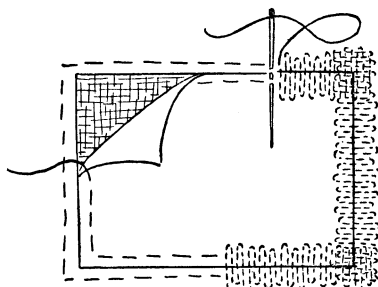
A plain-weave hand darn is the best way to mend most small tears in wool material. For a large tear, use a darned-in patch or an inset patch. The darned-in patch is better for thick wools—the inset patch for thinner ones.

To darn a **straight tear** by hand, start and finish about one-quarter inch beyond the tear. With matching thread and a fine needle, stitch back and forth across it on the right side with fine stitches. Keep the rows exactly in line with the yarns in the cloth. The darn will show less if you extend the rows of stitching unevenly into the fabric. As you turn each time to stitch in the opposite direction, let the thread go in easily. Do not pull it tight. If the darn will be strained when the garment is worn, give it added strength by darning over a piece of the same cloth or over a piece of net basted to the underside. If the tear is frayed, weave over the loose yarns alternately. Let the ends of broken yarns go to the underside.

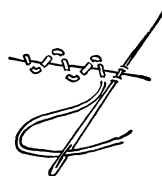
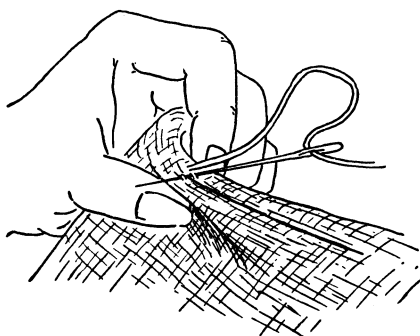
Darned-in patches may be used where a plain darn or patch might not look right. It is fairly sturdy . . . not as easily noticed on thick wool as a hemmed patch. Trim the hole so it is either square or rectangular. Cut the patch to fit the hole exactly, also to match the pattern and grain of the cloth. Baste the patch to net, then fit the hole down over the patch and baste—to hold the patch while you work. Use dull matching thread and darn each of the four sides of the patch as if they were straight tears. Let the darns overlap at the corners.



**Straight-tear
hand darn.**



Darned-in patch.



**Inset patch
on wool.**

To make an inset patch on lighter weight wools, follow directions for machine-seamed inset patch, pages 6 and 7. Then hide the seam line in this way. On the right side, pinch the seam line between thumb and forefinger. Stitch back and forth over the seam, being careful to catch only one yarn on each side of seam. (See illustration, p. 8.) Pull thread up close. When steam-pressed, this patch is hardly noticeable.

Corduroys and Velveteens

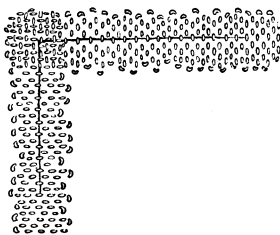
A darned-in patch may be used to mend garments of pile materials. But work the darn from the wrong side of the material instead of the right. When finished, brush well on the right side to lift the pile.

Three-Corner Tears

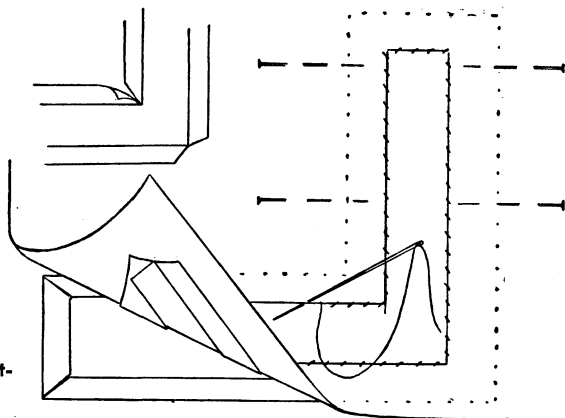
All Materials Except Wool

Patch small three-corner tears as you would straight tears. Trim the hole to form a square or rectangle. Then make a hemmed patch (p. 6).

The hemmed right-angle patch shown below may be used to mend larger three-corner tears on all materials except wool. This patch may also be used on smaller three-corner tears when material for patching is scarce. Except for its shape, this patch is made the same way as a plain hemmed patch. To make neat corners, clip them as shown in the illustration below.



Three-corner
hand darn.



Hemmed right-
angle patch.

Wool

A three-corner hand darn may be used to mend most three-corner tears on wool, large or small (p. 9). Darn as though each side were a straight tear. At the corner the two straight darns will lap over each other. This gives extra strength where it is needed. Like a straight darn, this one may be worked over net or over a piece of matching cloth laid on the underside for strength. Work with special care where the darns meet at the corner . . . or your mend may be bulky and show there.

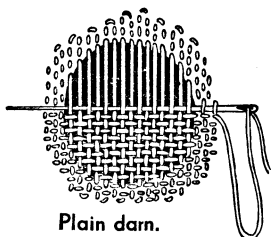
Snags and Small Holes

Woven Materials

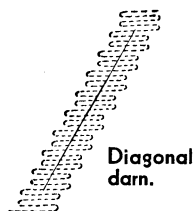
These materials may be hand-darned, or mended by reweaving. Reweaving is nothing more than a darn done carefully with matched yarn, so that it reproduces the original almost exactly.

To darn small holes, first get matching thread. If you ravel yarns from seams or from a piece of self material, use crosswise yarns for crosswise darning, lengthwise yarns for lengthwise stitches.

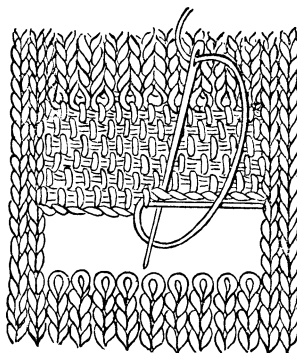
Leave the hole in the original shape, which usually is round. Trim out only the most ragged edges. Then, keeping the darn flat, work with small stitches back and forth across the hole . . . and far enough into the fabric to strengthen thin places around the hole. After darning in one direction, work in the opposite. Weave in and out on the right side to match the weave.



Plain darn.



Diagonal darn.



Blanket-stitch mend.

Knits

In knit material, snags or breaks stretch to form holes. Try to mend these while they still are small. The following mends will take care of most knit repair. For any type of mend, you'll need matching yarn. Ravel out a pocket or some other part of the garment you can do without . . . or you may be able to buy a matching skein.

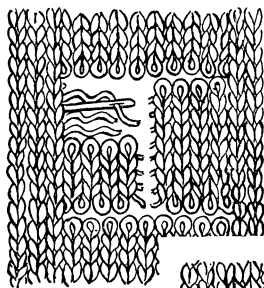
Knit-stitch mend. If the knit is plain, you can copy the stitch in the garment with a knit stitch. This mend hardly shows, and it will "give" as much as the rest of the garment.

To make it, first cut the material vertically a little above and below the center of the hole. Then make two horizontal cuts . . . one above the hole . . . one below it. Ravel the knit to the ends of the cuts. A thread may be run through the loops to be sure they won't ravel. Thread each loose end and run it back through the fabric on the underside. Then, with matching yarn zigzag across the hole lengthwise. Work the knit stitch as shown below.

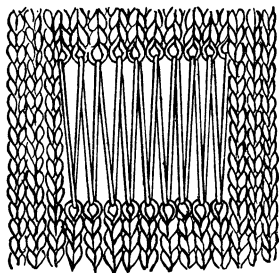
Blanket-stitch mend. This is easier to do than the knit stitch, but it shows more and has no "give." Never use the blanket stitch to mend any spot where the garment must stretch.

First ravel out a square hole as you would for the knit mend. Then pull in a crosswise yarn and work back over it with loose blanket stitches . . . one for each knitting stitch. Pull another yarn crosswise. Work back over it with blanket stitches and continue until the hole is filled.

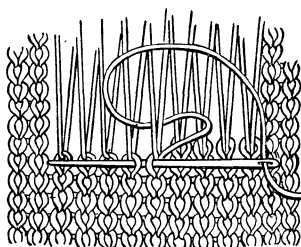
To keep a simple break in the knitting from growing, catch the end of each loop with a needle and matching thread. Tie off securely on the wrong side.



1



2



3

Knit-stitch mend.

Diagonal Cuts

Unlike a tear, a cut seldom breaks the material straight on the crosswise or lengthwise yarns. More often, it breaks the material diagonally . . . cutting yarns in both directions with one slit. Such a cut stretches easily . . . it loses shape and spreads if you don't mend it right away.

All Materials but Wool

If there is patch material, mend with a hemmed or an inset patch. Cut either a square or a rectangle, depending on the slant of the cut. Cut exactly on crosswise and lengthwise of the goods. See directions for hemmed patch or for inset patch, page 6.

On knit material, mend as you would a hole . . . with a knit stitch or blanket stitch (p. 11).

Wool

Mend a diagonal cut on wool with a darn. Because it is hard not to stretch a diagonal cut, baste a piece of net to the underside of the garment. Then with a fine needle and matching thread or yarn of the material, work from the right side and weave back and forth across the cut. Weave with the yarns of the fabric (see illustration, p. 10). Note that the stitches are not at right angles to the cut, as in mending straight and three-corner tears. If you take care to keep the material flat and don't stretch or draw it up, this type of mend can scarcely be seen.

Underarm Wear

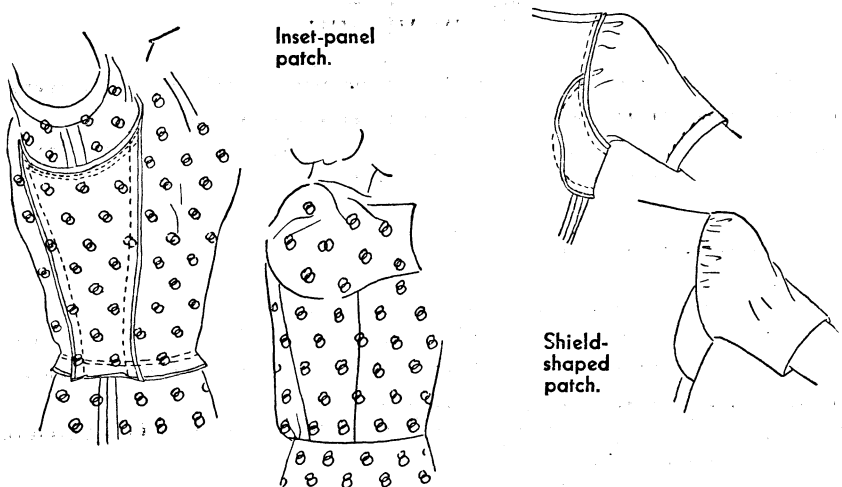
Underarm sections of dresses and blouses that have become worn or stained can be patched.

If only a small patch is needed, set in a shield-shaped matching piece of material. If the dress is ready-made, you may be able to get patch material from the hem, from pockets, or other style details you can do without. Seam the patch in under the arm, as shown on p. 13.

Remember when you cut the patch that you must leave double seam allowance on the patch edge that is seamed to the waist material—to make up for the seam allowance that must be taken out of the waist.

If it is necessary to patch the sleeve as well as the waist, make a similar shield-shaped patch. Or seam in a triangular gusset.

For larger patches, use scraps of self material if you made the dress yourself and have scraps available. Or you may have a jacket or bolero that you can get along without in order to save the dress itself.



To make a panel patch, cut out the underarm section from the sleeve down to the waist. Using this as a pattern, cut and seam in a new piece carefully matched. Don't forget to allow the seam allowance twice on edges to be seamed to the waist.

Worn Spots

As soon as you see worn spots on the elbows of a garment or in other places that get wear, do some preventive darning to make the garment wear longer and save yourself more mending later on. Use matching thread—weave it in and out to look as much like the material as possible.

Reinforce the underside of the thin spot with a piece of matching or similar material. Sometimes you can cut a piece from the hem if no scraps are available. Darn back and forth, through, and slightly beyond the thin spot, with tiny stitches. Keep the rows of stitching parallel with the lengthwise and crosswise yarns of the fabric. Sometimes it is enough to stitch back and forth with matching yarn raveled from the seams or a scrap of material. On knits, darn thin places on the inside of the garment.

If elbows of sweaters and knit dresses are worn through, make short sleeves and move the wristlets up to finish off the short sleeves. When you sew on a wristlet, stretch its cut edge to fit the sleeve. Seam and finish so it can't ravel.

If elbows on children's, men's, and boys' sweaters wear through, sew oval patches of felt or leatherlike materials on the outside. Old gloves, old handbags, felt hats, or ready-made patches sold at novelty counters can be used.

Fastenings

Buttons. Sew buttons on with a thread shank to prevent strain on the cloth. To make the shank, lay a couple of pins across the top of the button and sew over them. Pull out the pins, lift the button and hold it while the thread is wound around underneath.

If the cloth underneath the button has been torn—make a patch, then sew the button on again with a shank. On wools, rayons, and silks make a small inset patch (p. 6). On cottons make a strong hemmed patch (p. 6).

If a button has to stand a lot of pull, stay it on the underside with a piece of tape, ribbon binding, or a piece of selvage of the same material. On coats, jackets, and heavy cottons, sew a tiny stay button on the wrong side directly beneath the button on the right side.

Buttonholes. In ready-made clothes buttonholes often ravel. Fasten off any part not raveled, then rework with buttonhole or blanket stitch. If the hole has raveled out completely, machine-stitch around it . . . close to the edge. Then rework the buttonhole.

Snap . . . hooks and eyes. Sew these fasteners on through every little hole with as strong thread as will match the weight of the dress material. Save old fasteners on clothing you discard.

Pinholes. Heavy pins or brooches worn on dresses and blouses sooner or later catch yarns, leave ragged holes. A good thing to do is to work eyelets at the places where the pin goes through the material.

Small Repairs

Lingerie. Net or lace wears longer if you machine-stitch back and forth over torn or worn places. If broken places are large, baste to a piece of net footing, then stitch by machine. Mend broken edges of lace with a short blanket stitch in thread of matching weight.

Mend small holes in lace girdles with loose darns of matching thread.

Pulled-out shoulder straps on slips and brassieres often take a piece of the garment with them. Mend these by setting in little patches. Try to make them an attractive part of the garment. Put them on in diamond or triangular pieces and finish with Bermuda fagoting. Bermuda fagoting is hemstitching without pulled threads.

Fagoting often breaks on slips and gowns long before the garment wears out. When these breaks start, you can refagot them easily. Baste the two edges to be reworked to a piece of strong paper . . . leaving space for fagoting. Cut and pick out the old fagoting . . . then restitch to make it look as much like the original fagoting as possible. Another way to mend broken fagoting is to rip out about an inch of fagoting at a time . . . then follow with new stitches. Buttonhole twist matches best the thread used in lingerie fagoting.

Pulled-out seams. When a seam pulls out, the garment usually is already too close-fitting to allow for deeper seams. On a tailored dress with outside stitching you can mend pulled-out seams with an outside-stitched seam. First, reseam the garment . . . even though there is scarcely any seam. Then, on the underside of the seam, lay a piece of narrow matching tape. Stitch on the outside along both sides of the seam line, so the finished effect looks right with the rest of the dress.

If you have extra scraps of material, you sometimes can mend broken seams with small insets. Put the insets in to look as though they were part of the original dress design. Thus you can enlarge the garment at the same time you mend the seams.

Worn shirt collars. Rip off the collar; turn and resew it. For white shirts, it is easier and usually more practical to buy new collars at the notion counters. Try to match the quality of shirt broadcloth in the new collar. You won't be able to buy matching collars for colored shirts.

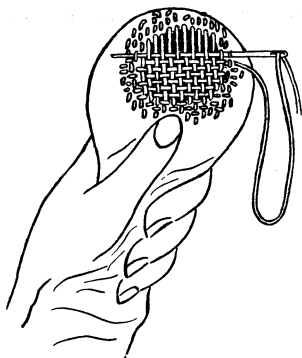
Hosiery

To darn a hole in the stocking foot, leave the hole in the round shape it took as it developed. Snip away ragged edges. Then, with a darning or your hand in the stocking, work with small stitches back and forth across the hole and far enough into the fabric around the hole to strengthen the thin, weak spot there. Darn in one direction, then the other—weaving in and out to make a plain weave.

Use only as many strands of the darning yarn as you need to match the weight of the stocking. The darn will look better and wear longer if you use yarn of the correct weight.

Pressed-on patches may also be used to make some of your older stockings wear a little longer. These patches are most suitable for holes or weak places in the stocking feet where they will not show.

When new hose run, they may be mended to look like new at shops that specialize in this work. If you mend your own, take a fine needle and fine matching thread. First catch the stitch that is making the run. Then, using the overhand stitch and working from the wrong side, mend the stocking a little beyond the ends of the run. Tie your mending thread securely when you finish. A special hook is available for reknitting runs, but it requires much patience to develop skill in using it.



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